

3 March 1981
MAU-1021

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, FBIS

THROUGH : Chief, Operations Group

SUBJECT : Monthly Report - Austrian Bureau - February 1981

I. GENERAL

The first pay increase for bureau nonstaff employees in nearly 3 years was authorized by Headquarters on 18 February after message exchanges confirmed that reclassification and adoption of the Embassy pay schedule would be further delayed because of wrong instructions Headquarters gave the bureau on writing new position descriptions. Partial cost-of-living pay increases, one effective retroactively to 13 January 1980 at 1.9 percent and the other effective 25 January 1981 at 2.85 percent, represent half the full cost-of-living increases granted to other Embassy employees. Depending on results of FBIS position classification when finally agreed, some employees may receive additional, full cost-of-living increases if their pay is not capped on entry into the Embassy schedule. Work was begun on rewriting bureau position descriptions to State/Interagency format.

The U.S. dollar's continuing vigorous recovery in exchange rates with the Austrian schilling and the West German mark in February, reaching the highest level in 3 1/2 years at AS15.53 to U.S. \$1.00 on 17 February, enabled the bureau to offer back budget funds totaling a net \$128,700 for FY-1981, or 8 percent of bureau-controlled funds. Nearly all the savings projected came in SOC 1152 pay costs for local/TCN personnel. The rate remained above AS15 to \$1.00 for all but six days of February, dipping only a bit below that level. Continued high U.S. interest rates and Eurodollar speculators' anticipation that the Reagan administration's budget/tax cut programs may strengthen the dollar were said to be the reasons for the prolonged dollar surge.

The dollar's strength led to a further reduction effective 22 February in the offsetting Post Allowance paid to U.S. staff employees, the cuts ranging from \$570 to \$785 on an annual basis, placing Vienna in class 20 percent. Since the dollar's lowest value against the schilling in 1979 and 1980, the post allowance has been reduced by more than half. The Embassy submitted a new retail price survey which it said should result in restoral of some of the lost allowance.

II. OPERATIONS

A. Monitorial/Editorial

1. Polish coverage again figured heavily in bureau output, the Polish press monitor working overtime the last day of the month to complete one item urgently requested by Headquarters before taking 2 weeks of leave, his first since June 1980. Arrangements were agreed with BBC to take over Kiev and Alma-Ata regional radio coverage the first two weeks of March so the bureau's backup Polish monitor, normally doing Russian/Ukrainian radio and press, could devote maximum time to Poland. Message exchanges discussed beefing up field Polish press coverage. Changes in Czechoslovak and East German press coverage of Polish events, following General Jaruzelski's appointment as premier 11 February, were described in a report prepared by Chief Monitor [] and Czech/Slovak press monitor [] on 27 February. It drew Analysis Group thanks for "a very useful and incisive" survey.

2. Vienna assumed "temporary" coverage for BBC of Moscow Bulgarian and Moscow Macedonian coverage, the latter reduced to once weekly with Headquarters' assent, on 26 February on retirement of BBC's last Bulgarian and until a replacement has been trained. Vienna also absorbed Moscow Serbo-Croatian coverage 24-28 February from BBC during a staff shortage caused by BBC monitor illness.

3. Belgrade television coverage produced its second unique textual item in 2 months, an interview with West German Chancellor Schmidt, on 9 February, arranged by phone call to the Belgrade contractor. Evidence of Belgrade Embassy use of television was provided in a 20 February telegram citing a foreign affairs panel discussion on CSCE including Soviet, U.S. and Yugoslav ambassadors to the Madrid meeting, and noting that "extensive notes" on the program were being pouched to the U.S. CSCE delegation. With advice from Chief, Operations Group, that an exception to the government hiring freeze had been obtained for Belgrade TV coverage, the bureau requested Embassy Belgrade to find a replacement for the present contractor, who leaves Belgrade 8 May.

4. Vienna coverage of Czechoslovak and Hungarian television, plus Balkan radios, carrying the 26th CPSU Congress starting 23 February, produced several editorial reports, FYI's and pouched cassettes. A sharp increase in facsimile transmissions via VCVC to PMU London, to 90 for the month, resulted mostly from Moscow press items related to the congress. On 2 March Vienna faxed an 18,000-word Tikhonov report covering three pages of PRAVDA because of priority Headquarters interest.

B. Communications

Bureau communicators had another outstanding month with a CIM reject rate of 0.88 percent, qualifying them for still another achievement certificate from Pirmasens ASC, the best of Mode V tributaries under this ASC. The Mode V circuit was down only 1:44, with no traffic filed by Vienna through London. Vienna advised Pirmasens against unrequested use of the London Bureau altroute, which occurred on the first day of the Moscow CPSU Congress when traffic for Vienna built up at Pirmasens.

C. Lateral Services

An Austrian TV "Club 2" panel program on the neutron bomb was recorded on 19 February for the U.S. ICA press attache at his request. The bureau handled two requests from the local MBFR delegation for items done and published months ago, one from a Soviet military encyclopedia and the other an interview with a former NATO employee who defected to the GDR. In each case Headquarters pouched copies to pass MBFR.

D. Technical

The month's technical highlight was a 31 January - 4 February orientation visit by [] new chief, ED&SS, during which a thorough tour of bureau facilities was given with emphasis on the Vienna-Caversham special VCVC circuit, its history, problems and status. On 24 February electronics specialist [] and two of the bureau's technicians visited the Vienna Sony service center for a maintenance training demonstration on the Sony 2630 videocassette recorder, using a bureau unit for the project. Procedures are to be written up to qualify bureau techs to perform this maintenance and to train the other technicians unable to attend because of duties.

III. ADMINISTRATION

A. Personnel

1. Electronics technician [] on 4 February was presented with his second suggestion award and a \$500 check for proposing an Extel teletype printer local line feed modification. All bureau printers have been modified to provide this more convenient feature.

2. Administrative assistant [] was granted a Quality Step Increase effective 8 February for sustained

outstanding performance.

3. The bureau received agreement from Chief, Operations Group, to return associate editor [redacted] to duty in mid-April after maternity LWOP as an appointed part-time nonstaff employee until her son is older.

4. Deputy Chief [redacted] traveled to the U.S., Columbus, Ohio, 21-26 February at his own expense to attend the funeral of a close, favorite aunt.

IV. COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Acting Chief [redacted] attended a farewell cocktail reception on 27 February given by departing Ambassador and Mrs. Philip M. Kaiser, who left Vienna on 2 March after only 11 months. No replacement has been announced yet.

[redacted]
Chief, FBIS Austrian Bureau

Attachments:

Publishable Wordage Report
Production Report
Non-Staff Personnel Report

cc: Chief, FBIS London Bureau